

CRITICAL INCIDENT DE- BRIEFING

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When do we do a de-brief

- Following any critical incident
- What is a critical incident?
 - Any event that is beyond the usual experiences of other humans
 - Any event involving death or serious injury to an emergency service worker
 - Any death or serious injury to a civilian in an unusual situation.
 - Any mass casualty situation.

Let's look at the incident at Virginia Tech

- What makes this incident a critical incident?
 - Mass Casualty
 - Unexpected event
 - The brutality of the event
 - The number of people influenced by the event
 - The event unfolded very rapidly.
 - Had both fatalities and seriously injured.
 - Dealing with predominantly young victims.

Critical Incident De-Brief

- When do we do it?
 - 24 to 72 hours post event
- Where do we do it?
 - Close by but not at the event location.
 - Consider confidentiality
- Who does it?
 - Peer de-briefer
 - Mental Health Professional
 - Team

Elements of De-Brief

- Describe process & emphasize confidentiality.
- Describe event.
- Get each willing person to describe their role in the event.
- “Normalize” their feelings and reactions.
- Education

Post De-Brief

- Have peers and professionals available after formal de-brief.
 - For how long?
- Have de-brief team make informal contact with individuals.
- Have professionals available for “drop in” consultations.

What does this mean in Tech Situation?

- Many agencies involved.
 - EMS, Fire, Law Enforcement, 911 Operators
 - Security personnel
 - Medical personnel at hospital
- Geographical distribution of agencies
 - Local
 - State
 - Federal

- Magnitude and scope of this event suggest to me that we need to be prepared for many months to support the personnel who responded to this situation.

Long Term Effects

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
 - Recurrent and intrusive memories of event.
 - Distressing dreams
 - Acting or feeling event is occurring now.
 - Intense psychological distress.
 - Physiological reactivity
 - Avoidance of anything associated with event.
 - Longer than 1 month
 - Negative impact on person's life

- Need to monitor for these symptoms for several years after event.
- Needs professional treatment.
- CAN BE TREATED
- Reaction may be delayed

Summary

- Peer De-brief reduces risk of long term negative effects.
- Helps personnel adjust to bad situation.
- Keeps good people in the field.
- Ultimately saves money for agencies.

Resources

- International Critical Incident Stress Foundation
- <http://www.icisf.org/>
- Local Mental Health Resources
- Questions?
- Vincent Rose, Ph.D.
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